

CLAIMS:

1. A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from that user.

2. A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community,

comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to  
5 post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client  
10 terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a subscription type indicating the way a user  
15 subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator.

3. A system according to claim 2, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual  
20 community.

4. A system according to claim 1, wherein said message subscription type setting means sets a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

25 5. A system according to claim 1, wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail, and browsing via a browser.

6. A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

7. A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client

terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

5 access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

10 community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said  
15 community processing means including:

20 reply message processing means for, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

8. A system according to claim 6, wherein said  
25 reply message processing means further automatically determines a topic to which the reply message should belong.

9. A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by

5 categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community,

15 from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including: the message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes

20 to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from that user.

10. A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

5           the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access  
10          permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

15          the message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

20          12. A method according to claim 9, wherein the message subscription type setting step includes the step of setting a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

25          13. A method according to claim 9, wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail, and browsing via a browser.

14. A reply message processing method in a

community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

the reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

15. A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which

can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

- 5           the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and
- 10          the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:
- 15          the reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

20          16. A method according to claim 14, wherein the reply message processing means includes the step of further automatically determining a topic to which the reply message should belong.

17. A program used in a community-based  
collaborative knowledge system which can be connected  
to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and  
supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and  
5 accumulating messages posted from each client terminal  
to a virtual community, said program making a computer  
execute:

the access control step of making user  
authentication of a client terminal as an access  
10 request source so as to permit the client terminal to  
post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a  
virtual community in which a plurality of client  
terminals can participate, and categorizing and  
15 accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community,  
from the client terminals, which are granted access  
permission in the access control step, for respective  
topics, the community processing step including: the  
message subscription type setting step of setting a  
20 subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes  
to the categorized and accumulated messages in  
accordance with an instruction from that user.

18. A program used in a community-based  
collaborative knowledge system which can be connected  
25 to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and  
supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and  
accumulating messages posted from each client terminal

to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

the message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator.

19. A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access

request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

10           the reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

20           20. A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

               the access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access

request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

- 10        the reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.
- 15